

I am writing to urge the voters of Coconino County to vote yes on increasing the life of the jail sales tax and the amount of that tax. Most citizens think of a jail as space used for punishment. For many however, the jail functions as a transition point, where individuals are held for court, or transfer to other institutions. Statistics show that the average inmate stays less than 2 weeks. Certainly some are under very strict management because of the nature of their behavior-many however are involved with the work of the facility or are on work release.

Jail operations stem from mandates of law in compliance with basic I requirements for humane treatment-. It is easy to understand the emotional response that such treatment is too good for the notorious but most prisoners are people with lives and families involved in our community, whose stay is relatively short, and offenses of a relatively minor nature.

In 1996, the voters of Coconino County approved a conservative proposal to build and staff a new jail facility. The approval involved raising a sales tax of .003%. That sales tax built and maintained the facility for ten years. Changes in circumstances have forced the County to request an additional .002% of tax for a total of .005%. For the future, the County Board has asked you, to extend the life of tax to allow them to plan long range. This money will not be used to expand the facility but to retire debt on the building, continue safe staffing, and expand programs for the drug and alcohol afflicted.

Therefore, I urge you in the strongest terms to vote yes and continue the use of the jail as a valuable community asset.

Terence C. Hance  
Coconino County Attorney